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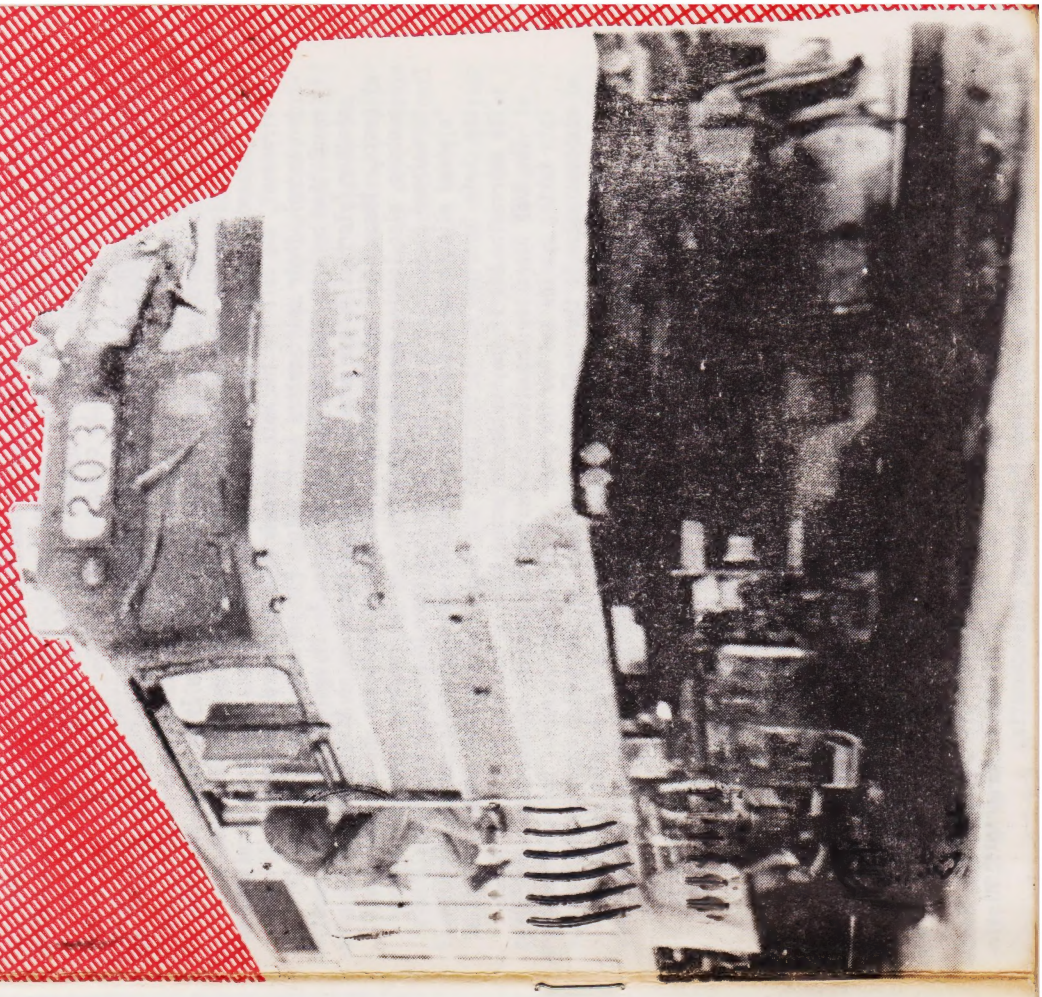

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FIRST CLASS

LETTERS

In answer to Carl Schiermeyer's blast (RTN #198) concerning my comment about California's apparent over-absorption in 403-b operations, I regret that he chose to skirt the central issue and dwell on a relatively insignificant parochial sidelight.

My main concern was that Clark Tyler used an invitation to speak to the NARP Board in Denver as a vehicle to extract in a pressure cooker atmosphere an endorsement of the present Amtrak management and their policies. When Tyler delivered his after-luncheon address he came in like Gangbusters in an apparent effort to intimidate NARP and make it clear to them that they would jolly well march to Amtrak's tune from now on and no opposition to their philosophy would be tolerated. Tyler's goal to all appearances was to pull the rug from under the Congressmen who supported the route freeze by soliciting a NARP cop-out and removing one of their strongest pillars of support.

After a volatile afternoon, a NARP Board member, without consulting other directors in all sections of the country (particularly where the greatest Amtrak train discontinuances occurred) jumped up and offered a resolution which, in essence, gave Tyler all that he could have asked for. While the NARP officialdom had performed well up to this point in countering Tyler's argument, they were apparently worn down or otherwise subdued to the point that they did not call for discussion as is customarily done after a motion is made and, worse still, did not call the Board into executive session in which case Tyler would have been asked to leave the room while discussion followed and a vote was taken.

Instead of being allowed to vote on this controversial issue in a relaxed environment, the call for the vote was made with the Board looking down Tyler's gun barrel, their split-second logic being, "If he sees me vote against this resolution he will retaliate against my region." It was a natural panic reaction whether Tyler would have done so or not and there was no time to ponder the prospects. Worse still was the plight of the Amtrak employees who are NARP Board members, also looking down the gun barrel. In the luncheon speech Tyler had threatened their daily bread by letting them know in no uncertain terms that a "divided allegiance" between Amtrak and NARP would not be tolerated. They could see their furniture out in the street and their last paycheck coming in just as the depression hit if they voted the wrong way.

The NARP Board now knows how the hapless inhabitants of Jonestown were talked into taking cyanide and how the power of persuasion can work. But--perhaps there was some value to the incident, as the Board got first-hand exposure to the type of pressure put on Congress a few weeks before and to the tactics of a highly-trained and polished lobbyist. Tyler is a master at his profession and was only doing what he does best and is educated and paid to do.

My criticism of numerous Board members including those from California to which Schiermeyer refers is over the fact that they "swallowed the cyanide". The best resolution in this instance would have been no resolution at all.

M. D. Monaghan, Director, NARP Region IX
Garland, Texas

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1980 could be a great year--if we don't blow it. Unfortunately, I have a great fear that we will.

As I write this letter in the first month of the new decade, it appears that for the first time in many of our lives we won't be fighting to preserve trains, and live in an era where many more people realize the potential of rail passenger service. We are free to devote our energies to achieve real gains in rail service. But, I ask, are we going to take advantage of the situation or are we going to sit back and do nothing more than ride the few trains we have.

Each and every rail advocate must devote twice as much energy this year to achieve expansion and improvement of our rail network. NARP and the various state organizations must, thru their newsletters and direct mailings, stimulate their members to act decisively this year. These organizations must work even harder to get new members as train-offs have been the most effective means of getting new members in the past. States must be encouraged to deluge Amtrak with 403-b requests, as this appears to be the only way passenger service and funding for such will increase. The public and the press must be educated about the obstacles to good rail service thru press conferences, free speech messages, letters to editors and peaceful, legal demonstration.

The reason there is an urgency to all these actions goes way beyond the obvious, that being the use of our energies for positive action. The foes of rail passenger service have not disappeared, and never will. We must always be one step ahead or else the eighties will be no different than the seventies, despite energy problems. Moreover, we must attempt to get everything we can now, because the elected and appointed officials of the future might be less receptive to rail improvements and more receptive to the anti-rail interests with more money. Finally, in future years, we might find ourselves back to where we were last year --devoting all of our energy to fighting budget cuts and train-offs. But if we achieve bigger budget outlays and new services this year, it will be harder to take them away in future years.

I realize this letter sounds fatalistic, but I feel rail advocates need to be stirred up. The future could be very bright indeed if we present a strong united front. We are the Davids, but if we never give up, never say no, we will overcome the Goliaths that have held us at bay so long. But we must never slow down in our efforts to improve rail service, least not now when the opportunities are greatest.

Ron Kilcoyne
San Francisco, California

I have been following with great interest the revived rail passenger routes proposed in your magazine. So far no one has noticed a NEW long distance passenger route of considerable promise: Edmonton-Calgary-Lethbridge-Shelby-Great Falls-Helena-Butte-Pocatello-Ogden-Salt Lake City-Provo-Las Vegas-Los Angeles. Currently, this might be coupled with a connecting train West Yellowstone-Idaho Falls-Ogden-Reno-Oakland. At the start, using current roadbeds, Calgary would have to be the northern terminus. With upgrading, the FOOTHILL EXPRESS should be able to originate from Edmonton.

Edmonton and Calgary each have over a half-million people; Alberta has over

ON THE COVER

The inaugural run of the second SAN JOAQUIN, Amtrak train 708, prepares for departure from Oakland CA on Feb 4. See editor Jim Russell's account of the beginning of the new service in this issue. Photo by RTN.

two million. Los Angeles, the Bay Area, the casino cities and Mexico, along with the Canadian Rockies are all popular destinations. In Southern Alberta there is a large Mormon population. Many Americans are employed in the oil industry. All the major Alberta centres on the route have colleges and universities. Due to oil development the level of wealth in Alberta is high and rising.

Transportation to the south, especially to the smaller centres, is hampered by the international border, and by cutbacks in air service, as well as by the patchwork bus system. As well, the climate often militates against the airplane and the highway.

Our small group is looking at a joint Canadian-American long distance train running at competitive speeds over the entire route, hopefully with enough speed to properly serve the smaller communities, such as Dillon, as well.

We're interested in hearing your comments.

Patrick V. Sullivan
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Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6E 5G7

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the two-hundredth issue of Rail Travel News! Altho this represents a milestone of sorts, we decided not to have a special celebration with this issue, since our tenth anniversary is coming up in December, 1980, only ten months away, and we will save the celebration until then. In this issue we do have a couple of special features. One is the coverage of the inaugural of the second SAN JOAQUIN. And then we have our seventh annual review of EMPIRE BUILDER operations--an especially interesting time to look at the train, just after introduction of entirely new equipment. Glenn Lee has written these reviews for the past six years, but he is on "sabbatical" this winter, and our current review is by Theodore Scull, who lives in Manhattan and does a lot of traveling around the Amtrak system. We hope you enjoy this issue of RTN.

REPORT COMES THAT PULLMAN-STANDARD WILL COMPLETE SUPERLINER CAR ORDER

We have a report from reliable sources close to Pullman-Standard that the car maker now intends to complete Amtrak's order of 284 bi-level Superliner cars at the rate of eight per month. However, at that rate the last car would not be delivered to Amtrak until the spring of 1982, creating a very difficult equipment shortage for Amtrak unless other steps are taken, and completely scuttling Amtrak's timetable for equipping Western long distance trains with the new cars. That timetable was given in our last issue (p. 4), and it indicated that the last train to be Superliner-equipped was planned to be done by January, 1981.

RTN has also learned that the first Sightseer lounge car has been assembled, and it seems likely that Amtrak will accept the car by Sept 1, 1980. Thus it is obvious that no bi-level lounges will be on the EMPIRE BUILDER this summer. Amtrak has available food service modules to place in the lower level of Superliner coaches, and it is assumed that Amtrak will likely install lounge seats in the upper level of coaches that carry the lower-level food service module, thus converting them into temporary lounges for the Superliner-equipped train.

★ INDIANAPOLIS TRAIN TO START IN OCTOBER

Amtrak plans an Oct 1, 1980 startup date for the Chicago-Indianapolis Congressionally-mandated demonstration train. Its Board of Directors on Jan 30 approved spending $11.8 million to overhaul tracks between the two cities to allow for a 4½-hour trip time. Work includes installation of 38 miles of new rail, replacement of 80,000 ties, resurfacing 120 miles of track, and improving grade crossings and signals. Work on the 47-mile Conrail portion of the line is about complete.

RIDING THE SUPERLINER EMPIRE BUILDER

RTN'S 7th ANNUAL REVIEW OF EMPIRE BUILDER OPERATIONS

by Theodore Scull

Seattle, January 12:
From the lobby of the Edgewater Inn, Pier 67, I called Amtrak's toll-free number to learn if the EMPIRE BUILDER would arrive on time this morning. The reply was that the train was reported 2½ hours late at Ellensburg WA because of severe weather conditions in Montana and North Dakota. It would arrive in Seattle at 11:30am, assuming no change in its late-running time.

The equipment would be turned and readied for the 5pm departure later in the day. I would be a sleeping car passenger on that train, and I hoped its consist would include the new Superliner sleeper, as well as the bi-level coaches and diner which had been in service only a few short months.

Just after 4pm I went to the station, where a large crowd had gathered for the EMPIRE BUILDER to Chicago and the PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL to Portland. There was no place to sit down. (The train had actually arrived at 10:30am.)

My airline-style ticket read "Roomette 6" in "Car 830", which reflected the reservation computer's use of the old 10-roomette, 6-double bedroom sleeping car. As I reached the sleeping car conductor's check-in desk, a man to my right was already asking whether the train would have the new sleeper, and would it be on the front or rear. The conductor, without looking up, said that he had no idea. Over his shoulder and thru the window, not 50 feet away, I could see that the train was already in place and the bi-level Superliner sleeper was on the rear. When I answered the passenger's question, the conductor looked up at me for a moment, with not exactly the most friendly expression on his face, then returned to his paper work. We both stood there for a while before he decided it was time to look at our tickets. He pulled the coupon and said, "Roomette six".

When I replied that the new cars did not have roomettes--only economy and deluxe bedrooms (plus a special bedroom and a family room)--he snapped, "You have roomette six like I told you. There are ten roomettes and you have number six. It's written right there on the ticket."

Fifteen minutes before departure, an announcement was made assigning coach passengers their cars according to their destination. It was obvious that the overwhelming majority of the travelers were destined for one of the 36 intermediate stops between Seattle and Chicago. Very few would board, as I was doing, for the entire 2281-mile journey to Chicago.

The black porter, Mr. Thorpe, greeted me outside car 830 and pointed to the stairs to the second level. With luggage, the narrow stairway, having two right angle turns on the way up, was somewhat of a struggle. I located my economy bedroom--which at present is sold as a roomette for a passenger traveling alone (altho if you ask, two passengers can be accommodated, in an upper and a lower berth). I do not know yet what single passengers will have to pay in the future to occupy these economy bedrooms.

The compartment appeared attractive and less claustrophobic than the more traditional roomette. There were two wide, comfortable facing seats, a large double window on the outside, and a window in the door and in the wall giving onto the central aisle. For privacy, a curtain could be drawn across the glass, with an option of keeping the door open or closed. The amenities included a small closet, a call button, and temperature controls for the electric heating.

I found two major drawbacks in the design of the economy bedroom. First, there was no toilet or wash basin in the room. One had to trek downstairs to one of the five unisex facilities, which are too cramped to do very much washing in. This omission is a great mistake in this country. The cheapest motel chain would not dream of building guest rooms without full private bathrooms.

Amtrak has spent millions to purchase the last word in sleeping accommodations, and they have skimped on what Americans consider a necessity. The planners at Amtrak headquarters, I fear, are still suffering an identity crisis. They are not certain that they should offer a truly first-class service, yet I was paying $241 for the nearly 48-hour trip to Chicago, and then $129 for the next leg to New York--in a real roomette with a toilet and wash basin--for a total fare of $370. As a comparison, in December I paid only $191.44 for the 2883 miles in a roomette in the CANADIAN from Montreal to Vancouver (this fare includes the 16% favorable exchange rate when buying the Canadian dollar).

The second design error was the absence of any storage space for luggage. The seats were about two inches too low for a bag to be slipped beneath, and there was no overhead rack which is available in the older cars. Passengers were expected to store their cases on the lower level.

The five deluxe bedrooms are currently sold as regular bedrooms, and they are spacious and well laid out. They come with a long couch that can easily seat three people, and a separate swivel chair. There is a washroom basin in a very small space in the room by the door to the corridor, and a separate enclosed toilet compartment with a shower attachment--tho this welcome feature is not yet operational and may never be. At night the couch makes into a bed, reportedly wide enough for two compatible people, and a second upper berth folds down from the wall. Passengers I spoke with liked the accommodation. Soon, however, the rooms will be sold at a premium price.

On the lower level there are four more economy bedrooms, a family economy room with two adult-size and two child-size beds, and a large special double bedroom designed for a handicapped person, with ample room for a wheel chair. Five washrooms and toilets are located on this level.

All the rooms were fully occupied at various times during the journey, tho not all, by any means, with paying passengers. The dining car steward, four waiters, three cooks, bar steward and sleeping car porter needed places to sleep. And until the crew dormitory cars are delivered, they will occupy revenue space.

The bi-level coaches are probably the most comfortable cars ever built for sitting passengers, and there were four such cars on this trip. They had 68 seats on the upper level and 14 seats on the lower level, all with leg and foot rests and ample room between the seats. Toilet facilities and baggage space were located on the lower level, tho passengers can store some of their luggage in racks above their seats. The first coach on this train was an ex-Santa Fe Hi-level transition coach needed, for the present, to provide access to the single-level baggage car behind the two F40 engines.

For the time being, there are no lounge cars. They were not a part of the original Superliner car order, and they will come later in the year. A small paper hand-written notice said that the train lounge could be found on the lower level of the third coach, ahead of the diner. Another sign, taped to the door of the "lounge", stated that the bar was closed. I could not believe that this was true at 6pm, so I walked on in. The bar steward was standing on a stack of paper bags because the floor was covered with water. His "bar" was made up of a few boards placed across the coach seats and he did not look happy, but he was open. I asked him about the sign on the door. He said not to take any notice of it. I ordered not one but two "light" beers from the list tacked up on the baggage rack, as it was a long way back to my accommodation. I could see that there was no place to sit in this "lounge". The steward said that the commissary in Seattle had not loaded the "light", so I would have to make another choice--Olympia or Rainier. I chose two "Olies", the local way of ordering an Olympia, and returned to my room to do some reading before dinner.

"Sightseer" lounge cars will be like Santa Fe Hi-level lounges (above) but with even larger windows.

The diner proved to be most attractive, and apart from the scenery, it became the focal point of the day, three times a day. The seating was arranged in two sections with the serving pantry in the center of the car. Food from the kitchen below was carried up on dumb waiters.

Only one section with 40 of the 72 seats was in use, this second week in January being the start of the off-season. The ten tables of four had comfortable cushioned vinyl-leather seats, white tablecloths, brown and yellow napkins, and rust-colored carnations. The other end of the car was used for passengers waiting for their table or for merely sitting and talking. However, drinks had to be obtained from the next car and downstairs.

The steward, Mr. Howe, said that the present arrangement worked pretty well, tho the serving area was too small. At Christmastime his seven waiters, needed to serve the full complement of 72 seats, were all over each other in the crowded pantry. The problem was complicated by the traffic that had to pass thru the car. The Santa Fe Railway had told Amtrak to enlarge the pantry and to put a corridor down one side for the passengers to go past, but they had already accepted the Pullman-Standard design.

The dining car crew, all black men with years of service, was excellent thruout the trip. One man, Mr. Crenshaw, was making his first trip in six months, after being injured in a derailment of the EMPIRE BUILDER last summer.

Before the new equipment arrived, this train had one of the poorest on-time records in the system, and was often, according to the crew, six to eight hours late. There would frequently be no heat in the winter and no air conditioning in the summer in the 30-year-old cars. They were patched up before, during and after each trip as best as the maintenance people could do, given the severe car shortage and the heavy passenger demand. Because the EMPIRE BUILDER went thru the greatest extremes of climate of all the long distance routes, Amtrak assigned it the first of the Superliner cars. They have tested well so far, according to the reports of everybody I spoke with in the crew.

In the diner I sat across from an elderly couple bound for Detroit Lakes MN, who had spent their time eating their way thru the international restaurants in the Seattle Center. At dinner tonight the husband had chosen a child's portion chef's salad and the wife a cup of mushroom soup. They were riding the train because of the inexpensive family plan in coach, and because they had not taken the train in 30 years. They said that they liked the new equipment and they would ride Amtrak again, to Florida next time.

I chose the most expensive thing on the menu--the 10-ounce New York cut sirloin steak which when ordered rare came well-done, a shameful thing to do to good meat. My dinner, with vegetable, baked potato and sour cream, lettuce and tomato salad, a half-bottle of California burgundy which came chilled as it always does on American trains, and a 15% tip, came to a moderate $12.70. Most items (chicken, fish, roast beef, etc.) with the extras mentioned above would have cost from two to four dollars less. Most meals on trains today are cheaper than before Amtrak took over from the private railroads nine years ago. Amtrak decided to make dinner in the diner moderately-priced to attract the majority of passengers, many of whom avoid-

ed eating on the train in the past because of the expense. The policy has been a success, as borne out by the long serving hours at each meal.

Snoqualmie Pass over the Cascades was closed to highway traffic due to blizzard conditions, according to a Seattle radio station. The EMPIRE BUILDER, tho, had no trouble crossing the mountains over the adjacent Stevens Pass in the same driving snow.

Just before Yakima, in Eastern Washington, I prepared my bedroom for the night. The two seats collapsed to form the lower berth, tho the mechanism in some compartments including mine can be difficult to work unless one has the strength of a Goliath. The porter had instructions not to make up the beds or assist passengers in the economy bedrooms, but he said that he was willing to help--that is, when one could locate him. The call button too often went unanswered. I offered to assist several older travelers not only to make up their beds at night but to put them straight in the morning.

The bedding for the lower berth was stored in the upper berth, which was locked into a 45-degree angle position. When it was lowered, I found that I could store my suitcase there. My pillows had no cases, and when the porter did not answer my call, I slipped into the room occupied by the brakeman and switched mine with his.

The curtains did not draw across quite enough to block out all the light from the corridor. I found that by using rubber bands wound round the knobs at the top, I could stretch them the entire way. All porters should, hereafter, be instructed to carry a generous supply of rubber bands.

The bed's cushioning was somewhat thinner than in the older sleepers, and if I stayed too long in one position, I could feel a soreness coming on. With one well above the tracks, the car rode quietly. On certain stretches of rough track, the trucks rode badly, more so than in the coaches.

I find that I rest more than sleep the first night on a train. The solitude on this night was broken at irregular intervals by the brakeman's radio when a control tower or passing freight wanted to contact "Amtrak eight" or simply "Number eight"--the BN's designation for the eastbound EMPIRE BUILDER.

Once during the night I arose to use the facilities in the lower level. I met an older couple in their dressing gowns doing the same thing. They did not say much, but they did not seem very happy when I passed them on the stairs. With only four of the 70 sleepers on order actually completed and delivered, Amtrak should make some modifications in the design and placement of the washrooms.

By the next morning we were deep into the mountains of Western Montana, and running an hour late. At Whitefish, over 100 skiers who had spent the night partying to celebrate the start of their "Pick of the Peaks" Amtrak vacation package, left the train for Big Mountain. The coach porters and some of the other passengers were glad to see them go. A number of new passengers boarded here, bound from the slopes to the plains of Eastern Montana and North Dakota.

At breakfast--always the best meal on any train--I sat across from a young resident of Skagway, Alaska (population 810, down from 30,000 in Gold Rush days). I had just come from there via the Alaska Marine Highway, and we shared some mutual acquaintances. He was en route to his second semester at Notre Dame in South Bend IN. By taking the plane from Skagway to Seattle to meet this train for Chicago, he saved $100 over traveling the entire way by air, yet his total fare still was a whopping $500. By the second morning he said he was, and he certainly looked it, quite exhausted and red-eyed. Airplanes do not have the curb on the market of red-eye specials.

A blizzard raged outside the train climbed thru Glacier National Park, losing no more time than the hour it already had lost during the night. Once beyond East Glacier and the shuttered National Parks hotel, we watched the mountains fall away, and the rolling hills of Big Sky country stretch into the evening and North Dakota.

The EMPIRE BUILDER gathered speed across the prairies, and by Grand Forks ND where the train has to back out of town before heading east, we were on time and remained that way for the duration of the journey.

In early 1978 Amtrak closed its downtown Minneapolis station and opened a new station midway between the twin cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul and called it Midway Station, St. Paul. The compromise has put the station in the midst of a light industry warehouse district with no public transportation access. The skyline of Minneapolis was passed by at some distance, and I never did see downtown St. Paul from the train. We might as well have been at an airport for all its convenience of location.

About noon, the electric power generated by the 6-month-old F40 diesel engines failed, and all the lights, air circulation, and kitchen electric stoves went on the blink. I overheard poor Mr. Howe, the steward, lamenting that the trip had gone so well until now, this the last day, and for some passengers the last meal. It embarrassed him greatly to be able only to offer cold turkey and cold ham and cheese sandwiches. To rectify the situation, he ordered 109 Kentucky Fried Chicken dinners to be delivered to trainside at La Crosse WI. By then, the electric power had returned, but it was agreed not to tax the system by cooking on all burners. Mr. Howe and his fine crew brought a complete meal to all the passengers, which was certainly beyond the call of duty, and his efforts left an excellent taste in the mouths, to use a pun, of everyone I spoke with on board.

The morning's running along the Mississippi River had afforded pleasant views of "Old Man River". The eastbound Milwaukee Road track was rough and slow-going. Apparently, the westbound line had been upgraded with welded quarter-mile rails. The schedule had a good deal of padding, and we were right on the mark into Union Station, Chicago, arriving there at 6:59pm.

Amtrak Superliner Empire Builder

The Empire Builder

Chicago
Fargo
Seattle

On Jan 14, 47½ hours after leaving Seattle, passengers bound for New York and Washington could walk across the platform to board the eastbound BROADWAY LIMITED due out at 7:30pm. This connection, which according to Mr. Thorpe, the sleeping car porter, is now made far more often than it is missed since the new equipment arrived last Oct 28, is not, however, guaranteed by Amtrak. Connections of less than one hour are not guaranteed, and therefore Amtrak is not responsible for expenses which might arise as a result of lateness of less than an hour and missed connections. I would not have taken the chance with the connection, as a dozen other passengers had done, and worried for two whole days about the timekeeping.

Apart from the power failure earlier in the day, the new equipment demonstrated that it has solved the most persistent problems of equipment reliability, which in the past had led to passenger irritation and lateness. Repair crews often delayed trains when they were called in to do a patch job along the way, and just as often there was little they could do with some of the older rolling stock.

Except for the sleepers, the Superliner equipment is hardly revolutionary, as the Santa Fe used this bi-level concept a quarter of a century ago in its Budd-built coaches, diners and lounges.

The introduction of the "Sightseer" lounge cars will certainly be a great boon to passenger comfort during a long rail trip. The camaraderie associated with strangers meeting strangers on moving trains has more than once solved the world's problems.

Amtrak hopes soon to have all their long-distance trains west of the Mississippi equipped with Superliners. The new cars can then offer a consistency of service which an older generation used to associate with train travel. And it will then be far easier for a rail supporter like myself to recommend going by rail. Personally, I shall miss the dome cars and the enormous variety of equipment that one could ride, but with the new rolling stock, homogeneous as it is, I am more likely to get there on time and not to freeze in the winter and broil in the summer, and come in contact with disgruntled passengers and demoralized and surly train crews.

The Superliners are here, on the EMPIRE BUILDER. Now bring the rest of them along--at the speed of an express train.

THE SAN JOAQUIN GETS A TWIN: THE INAUGURAL RUN OF THE SECOND SAN JOAQUIN TRAIN

JIM RUSSELL

The second SAN JOAQUIN on the Oakland-Bakersfield line began operation on Sunday, Feb 3 with little advance publicity. Sleepy Sunday-morning newspaper readers saw an ad announcing the train and offering a clipout coupon good for a $5 return trip with purchase no later than Apr 27 of a regular one-way ticket on the Valley Amfleet train. But at 7:25am that overcast morning in Oakland, only a few railfans were out to see the new train depart, with F40 engine 289 pulling Amfleet cars 21194, 20037, and 21198. At 3:50pm at Bakersfield the train's northbound counterpart, no. 709, would depart.

The following morning, Feb 4, was a different story. A large crowd had gathered well in advance of 7:25 for the departure from Oakland of the official inaugural press run of train 708. The morning was clear, and a bright moon was still shining down on engine 203 as it prepared to pull six cars away into the fogbound San Joaquin Valley--cars 21195, 20035, 21196, 21188, 20036, and SP business car 100 "Airslie". The heavyweight open-platform SP company car was substituting for Great Western Tours car 100, used on the DESERT WIND inaugural last October, which was bad-ordered a short time before the press run date because of dead batteries.

As we arrived at the station, Caltrans Director Adriana Gianturco was already on the rear platform of the "Airslie" where a small public address system was mounted, telling the gathered rail supporters about the new train and why the State of California is supporting it. Amtrak's Art Lloyd addressed the crowd briefly and then invited Director Gianturco to christen the new train with the now-traditional bottle of Almaden California champagne.

Gianturco smashed the bottle neatly on the first blow across the coupler of SP car 100 (who would have imagined a few years ago that an SP company car would be the accomplice to a passenger train inaugural on the line of that highly-determined passenger train eliminator?) and the invited guests and paying passengers poured aboard the train.

Every Bay Area rail supporter who could possibly get away this Monday morning was aboard--people representing Amtrak, NARP, Citizens for Rail California, the media, etc., etc.,--and some riders who had come from some distance for this event: there was RTN's own Peter Putnam Bretz who had trained up from Los Angeles to do this new run--and there was E. M. Frimbo himself, all the way from New York, who was riding all the way to Bakersfield and back again today, then taking the COAST STARLIGHT on his way back East.

We settled down in a cramped seat of car 20036 to await the historic movement of the train, and shortly our on-time departure arrived. "Greensleeves" was playing on the train's P.A. system as we gently pulled away from the old Oakland station. A waiter offered us a Continental breakfast. At 7:31 we had a meet with the southbound COAST STARLIGHT. At 7:38 we made a one-minute stop at Richmond. The Continental breakfast had made a nice appetizer, so we walked forward to Amcafe 20035 (20036 was serving only champagne and Continental breakfasts for guests) and purhcased a microwave-heated French toast breakfast. This proved to be very tasty, consisting of three thick slices of French toast, several small pork sausages, and orange juice.

Our first major stop was at Martinez at 8:07. Here a goodly number of riders came aboard, including the Mayor of the city. Our train turned eastward from here, and by 8:15 we plunged into a bank of the infamous ground fog that makes winter highway travel so treacherous in the Valley. The fog didn't slow our train, tho--we just kept railing ahead.

The major topic of conversation among rail supporters seemed to be Amtrak's equipment problem. It's a problem that's more in the heads of Amtrak managers than it is an actual physical problem of equipment. Here Amtrak has all kinds of well-made and well-liked passenger cars sitting around and it's regarding them as junk. The Superliner cars are not going to be delivered for much longer than Amtrak had planned--if indeed they are ever completely delivered at all--and the nation will not have enough passenger cars to meet its demands in the coming months and years of energy conservation. Why doesn't Amtrak consider its existing conventional cars a golden asset--which they are--and make the decision to upgrade as many of them as possible to electric power, as it is doing with some for the LAKE SHORE and BROADWAY? Instead it has numerous cars moldering around in the Los Angeles yards, for example, with vandals and transients gradually destroying them as Amtrak doesn't even bother to keep them locked. Citizens for Rail California recently had a look at that equipment and was horrified by the

In the valley fog at Riverbank, the two SAN JOAQUINS meet to exchange passengers--the press train on the left and train 711 on the right.

wanton vandalism and destruction that Amtrak is allowing to occur to those cars. Why in the name of George Pullman can't Amtrak wake up and pay attention to its critics who are telling it that the most sensible thing to do is to fix up its conventional cars. We suggested that perhaps a Congressional investigation into Amtrak's equipment "shortage" is in order.

At Stockton we stopped long enough for riders to detrain and take photos of the SAN JOAQUIN from a little distance. It is here that buses are supposed to connect with the trains to or from Sacramento, Marysville, Oroville and Chico. They are listed in the new Amtrak timetables, but sorry to say they are not running yet. Negotiations are still underway, and Amtrak hopes that within a few weeks the buses will be operating. What's more, the Bakersfield-Los Angeles bus connection times given in the Amtrak timetable are all wrong. The connection from train 710 leaves Bakersfield at 1:25am and reaches L.A. at 4am. That from train 708 leaves the Greyhound station in Bakersfield at 2:50pm and reaches the Greyhound station in L.A. at 5:50am. (Amtrak is recommending a Trailways bus instead that leaves the Trailways station in Bakersfield at 2:45am and runs into the Amtrak station in L.A. The Greyhound and Trailways stations are both about three blocks from the Amtrak station in Bakersfield. Trailways is now accepting Amtrak tickets, we understand.) The Greyhound bus to train 711 in L.A. leaves the Amtrak station at 3:05am and reaches the Amtrak station in Bakersfield at 5:50am. The bus to train 709 leaves the Greyhound station in L.A. at 12:45pm and reaches the Greyhound station in Bakersfield at 3:30pm. While the buses for the two new trains 708 & 709 are using the Greyhound stations, they will shift later to use the Amtrak stations.

We arrived at Riverbank, the stop for Modesto, at the scheduled 9:55. Here trains 708 and 711 are scheduled to arrive simultaneously, and indeed the 3-car train 711 was already waiting on the next track. Here we and a number of other Bay Area rail supporters including Adriana Gianturco switched trains to ride back to our starting point. Train 711 disgorged an amazing number of guests who had come north from Bakersfield and other points and who were also changing trains to travel back home. They would board the "Airslie"-equipped consist to join many others who were going all the way to Bakersfield.

A crewman signals the engineer by waving a timetable, and the first run of train 708, the second SAN JOAQUIN, will pull away from the Oakland station on Feb 3. Photos by the author.

Here at Riverbank Adriana Gianturco encountered a group of League of Women Voters members demonstrating with signs demanding a train that ran directly into Modesto. To do that, the SAN JOAQUIN would have to use the SP line in the Valley.

Our train 711 was held until 10:08 and then we took off back the way we came. This train had engine 233 and cars 21189, 20042 and 21190.

We bought a turkey sandwich--shredded turkey in a hamburger bun--which was pretty awful and settled back to watch the scenery of sloughs and water birds and rich green hills.

We were told later that bands showed up at the Wasco and Fresno stops. On the return, train 709 had the same consist, with the "Airslie" officially deadheading. At the Port Chicago crew change half of the SP crew was not on hand, and some time was lost settling that problem. The train had left Bakersfield 10 minutes late,

Adriana Gianturco christens new train; meets demonstrators at Riverbank. Right: the press train at Stockton.

and arrived in Oakland 20 minutes late--an unusual occurrence for the SAN JOAQUIN.

As train 711 neared the Bay we pulled out of the fog again. A little further down the shore of the Bay we looked across and saw Mount Tamalpais appearing as a Japanese "floating mountain" above the mists of the water. We tried to imagine that we were on a Bullet Train and Mount Fuji was floating on the horizon. It was too hard to maintain the fantasy, as our train was too curving and bouncing to be on the Shinkansen line that Alan Boyd admires. But we liked it anyway. Our little train has a pleasant personality of its own, and we certainly wish it well in the competition with ever more expensive highway travel.

RAIL CANADA

FEBRUARY 18 ELECTION in Canada saw Pierre Trudeau's Liberal Party returned to power. The significance of the election for rail passenger service may be that only two Liberal seats were won west of Ontario--and those both in Winnipeg. This means that when the Ministry of Transport emphasizes Eastern corridor service at the expense of Western lines, there will be few in the Cabinet to object. Altho Trudeau won without benefit of a printed election platform, he did state that he favored double-tracking the CN mainline in Western Canada. It is believed that the proposed gasoline tax led to the Conservatives' downfall. At the present, Canada has an extremely low gasoline price--only 82.5¢ per imperial gallon in Central Canada for example--and the public wants to keep it that way. It is known that many Americans are driving across the border to fill their tanks. The serious longterm problem is that the election may be viewed as a political signal to avoid dealing with the gasoline problem.

VIA RAIL CANADA has the same equipment pressures that Amtrak does in the U.S. Transport 2000 has written VIA asking what it plans to do to expand its fleet of cars to meet projected needs, not to mention actual needs to meet current growth in patronage. Said T-2000: "We believe that in the light of the need for a diversified stock of equipment, other opportunities besides the LRCs should also be examined: bi-levels, 'conventional' trains, HSTs and SPV-2000s, for example." T-2000 after meetings with VIA officials, reports that the company has no plans for anything other than the 50 LRC coaches and 22 locomotives. VIA top people told T-2000 not to suggest specific equipment, but to let VIA decide what is needed. T-2000 argues that this ignores the element of consumer choice (would automobile users accept a company dictate of only one type of car?).

IS VIA'S AIM, under orders from Ministry of Transport bureaucrats, to let trains, especially long distance trains, die a slow death from strangulation? Consumer group T-2000 believes this may be so, after discussions with VIA officials. High fares and lack of plans to order new long-distance equipment seem to point in this direction. The situation seems analogous to that of Amtrak's under Roger Lewis. T-2000 hopes, however, that VIA may begin moderating this position. It asks that people opposed to VIA's high minimum fares write VIA their complaints. Adress: Mr. J. F. Roberts, Chairman of the Board, VIA Rail, Box 8116, Montreal, Que. H3C 3N3.

VIA'S NEW TIMETABLE dated Feb 3-Apr 26 includes on p.21 full details on using RESERVIA, the new automatic ticketing and reservation system that becomes operational on March 1. U.S. numbers to call are: Boston, 617-426-7974; Buffalo, 716-856-2940; Chicago, 312-346-6222; Detroit, 313-963-6037; New York 212-586-6066. Major scheduling faults in the new timetable include the fact that you still cross the scenic Rockies in late afternoon, evening and night westbound. Eastbound, be ready to get up early. All this was to help Regina not to have impossible arrival times, but this is impossible. The problem would be resolved if CP Rail would permit a speedup between Banff and Regina in each direction. As predicted, the CP Montreal-area trains have not changed from Windsor St. Station to Central Station for the present. In Quebec City, CTCUQ regular buses now serve Ste-Foy Station, meeting all trains.

THE "CANADIAN" TRANSCON train now regularly includes a dome-observation lounge "Park" car in its consist.

ANNUAL SNOW TRAIN organized by the Aylmer-Nepean Citizen's (Transit) Committee had to be cancelled this year due to "enormous" VIA and CN price increases. Substitution of buses led to many customer cancellations.

NEW TRANSPORT 2000 group has been organized in Northern Ontario. For details, contact Bob Worrell, new T-2000 Executive Secretary, at 613-235-2865, or write Box 89, Nakina, Ont. P0T 2H0.

THE ANNUAL MEETING of Transport 2000 this year will be held at Windsor, Ont., on Oct 12. This permits T-2000 to attend a conference to be held at Detroit on Oct 9-11 with NARP on international passenger train services.

THE QUEBEC GOVERNMENT has appointed a special committee to investigate ways to electrify Quebec railways to save oil and use hydro power. The Ontario government has followed suit, with a committee of its own to investigate electrification, beginning with the GO line around Toronto.

VIA RAIL CANADA announced Jan 24 that it is opening new employment offices in Moncton, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver.

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT

LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD commuter train bound from Port Jefferson to Huntington derailed on a curve one mile west of Smithtown station on Jan 12 at 9:40am. The last coach and the locomotive on the rear of the 4-car push-pull train derailed but remained upright on the track. The train was running at less than the 40mph speed limit. About 2000 feet of track were torn up, and almost 2000 gallons of fuel spilled. There were no injuries and service was restored the next day.

ILLINOIS CENTRAL GULF'S new $125,000 snow plow for Chicago commuter lines was inspected by the RTA last month. The double-end plow was built from two electric commuter power cars, nos. 1194 and 1224.

STATE RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION in Maryland announced Jan 17 that it is postponing for 6 months the closing of the Lanham and Landover commuter stations after public concern. Additional service proposed for the Halethorpe and Frederick Road stations has been cancelled.

WASHINGTON'S METRO SYSTEM announced on Jan 31 its 1981 budget--$280 million, up about $60 million from this year's. The budget projects that Metrorail fares will increase between 5¢ and 25¢ depending on trip length. Suburban bus fares also are to go up 7%. Its operating deficit will reach $152 million. Public hearings are to be held on the budget. Higher salaries, workmen's compensation and fuel costs have driven up the system's budget, officials said. By 1985 Metro is projected to carry 271 million passengers. However, the increase in numbers of automobiles in the Washington area is expected to be so high that the numbers on the road won't be reduced by the expansion of the system's ridership.

CHICAGO'S RTA OFFICIALS have been meeting with federal officials in an effort to obtain a loan to save the Rock Island's commuter line as the railroad itself is dissolved.

SAN FRANCISCO BEGAN first revenue operation of its new LRV streetcars on the N Judah line on Feb 18.

ATLANTA RAPID TRANSIT system opened its 5.1-mile West Line the weekend before Christmas, almost doubling the size of the system now operating.

SAN FRANCISCO'S CABLE CARS on part of the Hyde St. line began running again on Feb 20 after a long shutdown for repairs. The Powell-Mason line will reopen in April. The California St. line opened in Nov 1979.

SENATE-HOUSE CONFEREES on Feb 20 decided that 15% ($34 billion) of the windfall profits oil tax will go for transit and energy projects.

Mixed Train of Thoughts

AMTRAK'S "EMERGING CORRIDORS" report, due out Jan 30, has been delayed. An Amtrak spokesman said that it is now expected out about March 1.....

AMTRAK'S NATIONWIDE TIMETABLE dated Feb 3-Apr 26 was out on schedule. The new 52-page timetable is printed in black and orange. Among the schedule changes it shows is a shortening by 30 minutes of the southbound CRESCENT schedule. Amtrak cut in half the time allowed for switching engines in Washington, and moved the New York departure time to 15 minutes earlier--2pm. Amtrak said the earlier departure time is intended to put the train on a "memory schedule" so that all New York to Washington departures will occur on the hour or half hour. Because of these changes, the CRESCENT now runs 45 minutes earlier between Washington and New Orleans. There is no change in the times of the northbound train. A new stop, at North Philadelphia, was also added--northbound at 11:59am and southbound at 3:34pm. Amtrak said patronage on the train has increased 50% in the first ten months since it took over operation of it from Southern Railway (on Feb 1, 1979).....

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THE INTER-AMERICAN will get upgraded dining and lounge service later this year, Amtrak announced on Feb 5. Amtrak will convert, at a cost of $101,940, five Amdinette cars into lounge-dinette cars for the train. Amdinette cars now have half coach seating and half booth seating. Amtrak will replace the coach seats with lounge seats. When the cars go into service, the INTER-AMERICAN will have sit-down food service in the Chicago-Houston Amdinette and full lounge and snack service in the Chicago-Laredo car. South of Temple TX, where the train splits, the Laredo section will offer tray meals as well. Work on the cars will get underway this spring and should be completed by Nov 1980.....

HEAVY TROPICAL RAINSTORMS hit the West Coast in mid-February. The effects on rail service were that the San Diego line was closed at 7am on Feb 18 due to a bridge washed out at San Onofre. It was expected to be open by 4pm on the 19th. Flooding on the SOUTHWEST LIMITED line between Pasadena and Pomona, with a bridge out on Feb 18, caused that train and the DESERT WIND to detour on the Santa Fe line via Fullerton CA. The COAST STARLIGHT was blocked by high water on the SP between Willows and Orland CA on Feb 18 & 19 and detoured via Marysville and Chico. Passenger trains using the SP line thru Martinez CA were being delayed by slow orders due to high water there.....

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS of Amtrak at their Jan 31 meeting approved beginning the next-to-last phase of modernization for its Beech Grove, Indiana maintenance facility. The next step costs $2.3 million (the entire program runs to $23 million) and it covers continuing rehabilitation of wheel, trim, forge and maintenance shops, construction of an administration building, upgrading of the power plant building, and road and parking lot improvements. The total program on the shops is scheduled for completion by mid-1982.....

SALT CITY EXPRESS, Amtrak train 62, eastbound at Schenectady on Jan 27, collided with an automobile at a crossing, damaging the car severely but only damaging the Turboliner's coupler. No one was injured. The train was delayed 20 minutes.....

THE NIAGARA RAINBOW, with the Feb 3 schedule change, was renumbered as train 77 on Saturdays and Sundays, on which days it leaves New York westbound an hour later, at 8:30am. Weekdays it is still train 63, leaving New York at 7:30. The eastbound train 64 remains unchanged. One other change occurred in Empire Service schedules: the Albany-New York DEWITT CLINTON, train 76, operates daily 35 minutes later, leaving Albany-Rensselaer at 7:45pm.....

ON-TIME PERFORMANCE for December makes an interesting comparison between steam-heated and electrically-powered (HEP) trains. On Amtrak's 24 long distance routes HEP trains had an on-time performance of 76%. The nine routes with steam-heated trains had only a 55% on-time record. The most notable on-time records are those of the LAKE SHORE LIMITED and EMPIRE BUILDER. The LAKE SHORE routinely has arrived in Chicago 15-40 minutes early and has been able to make up late time between stations. (If Amtrak could pressure Conrail to raise speed limits from the present 70mph on most main line track to 79mph, the legal limit, as much as two hours could be cut from the schedules of the LAKE SHORE.) The poor SOUTHWEST LTD record of only 29% was due partly to slow orders because of track inspections as a result of the Kansas derailment in Oct 1979. These slow orders have now been lifted, and during Jan and Feb the SOUTHWEST has been running on time nearly every day. You can expect improvement in the BROADWAY's performance later this year when it goes to HEP equipment. In fact, the train has already been doing better as a result of Conrail track improvements, despite using wornout E unts for motive power...

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FOURTEEN HI-LEVEL STEPDOWN cars are now in the Topeka shops being converted to HEP and receiving other modifications, including a dormitory section on the stepdown end of the car. One Hi-level diner, #9982, is in for HEP conversion. And Amfleet cars have made their first appearance at Topeka. Cars 21806, 21028 and 21055 are ther for minor derailment damage. Other cars there for possible repair to wreck damage are 8061, 2203 "Silver Swan", 3352, dome observation 9253 (for fire damage to drawing room only), 8351, 8071, 3404, and 1070. The first of the Hi-level conversions is expected to be done by about Apr 1, with one car per week to follow.....

A TRANSPORTATION EMERGENCY was declared for Lake Placid NY by the Governor on Feb 17 because of the foulup of bus transportation into the Winter Olympic Games area. Due to the small size of Lake Placid, visitors to the games coming by auto must park outside town and take a shuttle bus about 15 miles to the games area. The weather turned cold and snow fell, and people were waiting in long lines for buses that arrived only slowly. A Greyhound management team was called in to replace the non-professional directors that Olympic Committee had been relying upon. And a fleet of Greyhound buses was added. The emergency declaration allowed state regulations about buses and drivers to be suspended in order to get more there to handle the difficult situation. The State DOT was also partially taking over control of the traffic management at the games. Greyhound was asking for a fee of about $16,000 per day for its services, having some time ago refused to run buses to the games without compensation as an advertising gimmick. Some blamed an influx of unauthorized sightseers for the crowded bus lines. Those fortunate ones who came by train apparently experienced few of these problems. The Adirondack Railway station is only 5 blocks from the skating arena, one mile from Intervale, and 12-13 miles from the farthest game location, White Face Mountain. An Adirondack Railway spokesperson told RTN that the company had "quite a few good-size crowds" on its trains from Utica to Lake Placid. The railway wasn't getting complaints, and only once did their train miss a connection with Amtrak. They had had quite a few callers--more people requesting information than making reservations--and a lot of them mentioned RTN as their source of information. Buses had been "pretty good" in meeting their trains, RTN was told.....

THE "OVERNIGHT TRAIN" between Sacramento and Southern California is about to go to the arbitration panel. Amtrak's attorney has a Feb 26 final filing date, and then the panel gets the case to decide. A decision might be expected as soon as April, but mid-summer would be the earliest possible startup date, assuming the decision is in favor of initiating the service.....

SAN DIEGAN RIDERSHIP for January, from conductor counts, showed 84,224 people riding the trains, compared to 58,192 in Jan 1979. SAN JOAQUIN patronage was noted as heavy on the Washington's Birthday weekend (Feb 16-18), with over 750 riding one day. Three-car consists with standees have been seen.....

THE SOUTHWEST LIMITED derailed at Shoemaker NM, near Las Vegas NM, at 5pm on Feb 7. A rail broke under the third engine, derailing it and the next nine cars. The last two sleepers stopped before reaching the damaged track. The train was moving at only 42mph due to many curves. No one was injured, and passengers did not realize the train had derailed, since all cars remained aligned forward. The accident happened between the switches of passing track, so the line was not blocked. Consist of the train was SDP engines 505, 506, 511, cars 1104, 1217, 1517, 9935, 9942, 9971, 9980, 9918, 2202 "Silver Thrush", 2255 "Star Vale", and 2558 "Rock Creek". Passengers (about 115) were taken back to Las Vegas NM by school bus and were given dinner at a local cafe. Near-blizzard conditions made it necessary for 4-wheel vehicles to pull the school buses over some of the hills. Three chartered Trailways buses picked up the passengers at the Las Vegas High School, where they waited after dinner, and took them to La Junta CO, where they arrived at 6am Feb 8. Amtrak sent the consist of train 301 (the ANN RUTLEDGE) from Kansas City to La Junta. It left at 9:30pm on Feb 7 and arrived at La Junta to pick up the passengers the next morning. A near blizzard with up to 16 inches of snow greeted the ANN RUTLEDGE as it made its way across Kansas to perform its mission of mercy, with engine 312 and cars 21880, 20204 and 21118. It was combined with the remaining SOUTHWEST LTD equipment and left La Junta at 9:22am on Feb 8, with the following equipment: engines 505, 506, 312, cars 21880, 20204, and 21118. The makeup train arrived Chicago at 4:32am on Feb 9, 13hrs, 27 mins late. The ANN RUTLEDGE on Feb 8 (train 304) saw a Jefferson Lines bus (#249) as a substitute, carrying 18 passengers and four train crewmen.....

BRITISH POST OFFICE will issue a commemorative stamp on Mar 12 for the 150th anniversary of the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, the first to carry passengers and mail. The strip of five stamps, pictured here, when intact will show an antique train with the famous Stephenson's Rocket engine pulling it. Not all the variety of cars shown were actually included in a single train, however.....

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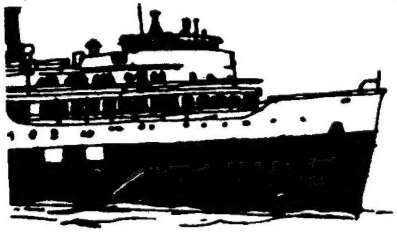
THE "PRINCESS MARGUERITE" mini-cruise steamship between Seattle and Victoria has been helped by RTN readers writing letters of support. Now the ship needs more support at a critical point. The B.C. transport minister announced he will replace the vessel with a lesser ship, the "Queen of Prince Rupert". He can be overridden by the B.C. Premier. We suggest letters to: Premier Bill Bennett, Parliament Building, Victoria, B.C., Canada. Ask him to continue the ship and upgrade it for the 1980 season. The business community also supports the ship and is conscious of the tourist business it brings Victoria. Also, letters to the editor, the Victoria Times, 2621 Douglas St, Victoria V8W 2Nf...



THE VIRGINIA CORRIDOR, discussed in an RTN article in issue 198, is getting more support. Amtrak's VP-Government Affairs Lawrence Gilson wrote to several Congressmen: "I am pleased to advise you we are presently discussing with Virginia implementation of a second daily Washington-Richmond-Newport News train to complement the COLONIAL schedule." The Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club passed a resolution supporting operation of another train on the route. Officials of both "The Old Country" in Williamsburg and "Kings Dominion" in Doswell, major theme parks, have begun plugging more train service, fearing the possible

effects of high prices and possible shortages of gasoline this summer. Even Senator Harry Byrd, normally apathetic about Amtrak, has shown interest.....

YOU KNOW TRAINS have come back in style when... you see a full-page color ad in the New Yorker (page 9, Feb 18 issue) of a couple on a second honeymoon in an Amfleet parlor car. It includes a honeymoon photo of them posing outside an unidentified old coach bearing the number 503. They don't seem to have aged much over the years. Maybe train travel keeps you young.....

AND TRAIN TRAVEL keeps you alive, as Amtrak found when it put out a Feb 5 press release noting that train travel is the "safest mode". A record 21.5 million people rode Amtrak last year with a single passenger fatality, the release said. Since Amtrak took over in 1971, it has had only 14 passenger fatalities resulting from rail accidents--11 of them in the CITY OF NEW ORLEANS derailment in Jun 1971. The last accident-related passenger fatality occured in Dec 1976.....

THE AMTRAK "CRESCENT" was the subject of an Associated Press story in late Jan. It has the "fastest growing train ridership in the nation", the release related. Ridership increased 49% in the first nine months of operation, said Amtrak's John Jacobsen. Local TV coverage in the South was excellent, with an aerial view of the train speeding across the countryside, and a view inside the busy dining car. Passengers interviewed had nothing but praise for the train. Jacobsen said Amtrak is considering whether to earmark some of its soon-to-be-ordered low-level cars for the CRESCENT..... THE SUNSET LIMITED arrived in New Orleans on time on Jan 27, but it was a bus--the train had terminated at Houston.....

AMTRAK'S EQUIPMENT TRAIN to the Beech Grove shops runs thru Crawfordsville IN once a week. The eastbound comes on Tuesday afternoon and the westbound usually on Wednesday morning. They consist of 2 or 3 Amtrak engines, assorted cars, and usually a Conrail caboose. The trains are on Conrail from west of Crawfordsville --they don't follow the route of the proposed Chicago-Indy train west of there.....

ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN RAILROADS has condemned the recently-proposed FRA track standards, those described earlier in RTN that would slow down passenger trains...

A FEDERAL JUDGE on Jan 25 ordered the liquidation of the Rock Island Railroad, rejecting the plan of the bankrupt line for reorganization. Liquidation is to begin March 2. The Rock Island will become the first major railroad to be so dissolved in the history of this country.....

THE AMTRAK "CRESCENT" arrived New Orleans on Feb 5 at 11:38pm instead of 7:15, delayed by a detour somewhere in Virginia.....

AMTRAK'S ALAN BOYD told a federal court hearing on Feb 4 about the SUNSET delays that there is a great deal of "unnecessary and avoidable freight train interference" with the SUNSET on the SP line. The train had on on-time record of only 3.8% in November and 7.7% in December, Amtrak said.....

THE ADIRONDACK RAILWAY has been taking delivery of more equipment: George Pinns' former car "Shenandoah", VIA Rail 10-6 sleepers and reclining seat coaches, a D&H RS-3 engine (#4075), and perhaps some ex-D&H coaches presently running in commuter service on the MTA New York-Poughkeepsie.....

THE PRAIRIE MARKSMAN will be the name of the Chicago-Peoria train, according to Illinois state sources, and the full-distance fare will be $15. A railway union dispute has been resolved, clearing the way for the new Amtrak service, which may start this summer. Tentative schedule calls for the train to leave Peoria at 6:15 am, to stop in Joliet and reach Chicago at 9:55am. It leaves Chicago at 6pm and reaches Peoria (actually East Peoria) at 9:35pm..... DEPUTY TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY William J. Beckham Jr. was sworn in on Feb 12.....

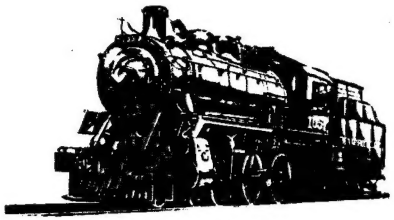
QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"I have seen the sun come up over the Bosporus, the Alps, the Himalayas, and many evocative parts of the world, but none exceeds in drama the sunrise over the steel mills of Pennsylvania... The sunrise over the steel mills would by itself have been worth the fare--$116, or about £50, the same as the fare by sleeper from London to Inverness, a journey some 220 miles shorter. I shall certainly do it again."

--Michael Leapman in "Diary Aboard the Broadway" in the Times of London, Feb 4.

SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB***

	"100 Metroliner Service	
	...	
Washington DC (ET)	Dp	6:00 A
	...	
New York, NY -Penn. Sta.	Ar	9:30 A
	Dp	
	...	
Kingston, RI		6:10 P"



--Amtrak National Train Timetables, Effective Feb 3-Apr 26.

(It's called the "Kingston Express".)

CARS & CONSISTS

*SUNSET LIMITED, train 2, New Orleans Jan 15: engine 530 (SDP); cars 1087, 9959, 9943, 9901, 3312, 8041, 2610 "Pacific Falls", 2261 "Placid River", 2860 "Tye River" still with SR logo, 2213 "Indian Flute", 2700 "Lake Wales".

*CRESCENT, train 20, Washington Jan 18: engines 258 (F40), 417, 473 (E's); cars 1208, 1405, 5427, 5655, 5413, 5624, 3324 "General Lafayette", 8383, 2853 "Pacolet River", 2852 "Flint River".

*EMPIRE BUILDER, train 7, Chicago Jan 27: engines 311, 264 (F40's); cars 1156, 39920 (ex-ATSF transition car with HEP), Superliner cars 39027 coach, 39026 coach with temporary snack bar below, 38009 diner, 32003 "Edward R. Ullman" sleeper.

*COAST STARLIGHT, train 11, Portland Jan 29: engines 516 (SDP) & 2 more SDPs numbers unknown; cars 1004 "Silver Coyote", 1500, 4526, dome 9469, 4532, 4502, 4401, 4530, dome 9354, 8033, 2652 "Silver Butte", 2674 "Silver Channel", deadheads 4842 & 5684. Train arrived Davis one hour late. Same, Davis CA Jan 13: engines 535, 615 (SDP's); cars 1014, 1552, 4526, dome 9466, 4861, dome 9473, 4512, 4482, dome 9362 "Mountain View", 8038, 2601 "Pacific Beach", 2656 "Silver Crag".

*SILVER METEOR, train 87, Jacksonville Jan 16: engines 631, 634 (SDP's); cars 1098, 1409, 2794 "Pinellas County", 2708 "Greenwood", 2531 "Cardinal", 8023, Miami coaches 4416, 4431, 4586, 4427; 3323 "Johan Printz", St. Pete coaches 4444, 4412, 4411, 4437; 8011, 3210, 2816 "Potomac River".

*SOUTHWEST LIMITED, train 4, Kansas City Feb 9: engines 518, 527, 526 (SDP's); cars 9983 deadhead, 1181 deadhead, 1264, 1244, 9995, 9933, 9952, 9975, 9909, 8062, 2256 "Star View", 2674 "Silver Channel", 2671 "Silver Plateau", (2255 "Star Vale" & 2558 "Rock Creek" deadhds on at La Junta from derailed train 4 of Feb 7), 2536 deadhead on at Topeka shops.

*DESERT WIND, train 36, Barstow Feb 8: engines 214, 232 (F40's); cars 1213, 21854, 20231 Amdinette, 21825, 20043 Amcafe, 21185, 21269 (last 3 to Las Vegas).

*SILVER STAR, train 92, Miami Jan 17: engine 630 (SDP); cars 1360, 1423, 2697, 2534 "Robin", 8021, 4418, 4442, 4422, 4433, 3301.

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*NORTH STAR, train 10, St. Paul Feb 3: engine 328 (F40); cars 1255, 2882 (ex-2638 "Pacific Shore"), 20215 Amdinette, 21115, 21835.

*WOLVERINE, train 350, Chicago Feb 4: engine 316 (F40); cars 21236, 21192, 20124 Amclub.

*NIAGARA RAINBOW, train 63, Albany-Rensselaer Feb 5: engine 303 (F40), power car 694; cars 1364, 21148, 21029, 20217 Amdinette.

*Adirondack Railway Extra #29 East, Lake Placid NY Feb 8: engine 29 (RS3), N&W 1368 steam generator; parlor-diner-lounge 80, P70 coaches 68, 92; P70 coach unmarked, P70 coach 73. (All Railway equipment painted Pullman green with gold trim.)

LATEST AMTRAK RIDERSHIP FIGURES

DECEMBER 1979 FIGURES--SECOND COLUMN IS % INCREASE OVER 1978

Metroliners	134,214	-12.5
NE Corr Conventional	410,119	-5.4
New Haven-Springfld	26,117	-6.3
NY-Philadelphia	186,162	6.9
Phila-Harrisburg	84,824	8.3
NY-Harrisburg	17,291	8.7
NY-Niagara Falls	58,641	-6.8
Chicago-St. Louis	10,257	-3.4
Chicago-Milwaukee	24,970	- .6
Chicago-Detroit	35,315	-13.4
Chicago-Carbondale	13,679	-6.2
Chicago-Quincy	8,442	2.8
L.A.-San Diego	82,884	34.4
Portland-Vancouver	12,900	-17.3
Washington-Cincinnati	9,540	86.3
Wash.-Martinsburg	19,271	-6.7
Oakland-Bakersfield	5,671	-24.7
New York-Montreal	10,968	11.6
Chicago-Port Huron	9,152	-5.7
Chicago-Dubuque	5,373	6.3
Chicago-Duluth	9,178	-10.5
Chicago-Valparaiso	14,750	--
Chicago-Kansas City	9,964	24.8
Washington-Montreal	32,163	4.8
New York-Florida	61,291	-18.9
Chicago-NY/Washington	22,641	1.0
Chicago-Cincinnati/DC	12,451	13.7
Chicago-Seattle	30,831	48.4
Chicago-S.F./L.A.*	45,478	59.8
Chicago-Los Angeles	30,169	- .1
Chicago-New Orleans	19,913	-6.3
Chicago-Texas	20,182	51.6
L.A.-New Orleans	8,105	-17.9
L.A.-Seattle	47,143	4.4
Chicago-NY/Boston	26,706	-3.4
Boston-Newport News	56,576	-2.8
New York-Savannah	36,553	1.7
Seattle-Salt Lake	16,194	-2.5
New York-New Orleans	20,717	--
Special trains	5,060	13.7

*SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR plus DESERT WIND

Total systemwide ridership for December was 1,692,459--a 2.1% decrease over December 1978. Long distance was 487,113--an 8.9% increase; short distance was 340,955--an 8.0% increase; Northeast corridor was 859,331--a 2.8% decrease. The overall decrease reflects the loss of riders from the routes discontinued in October. If those routes, which carried 77,899 passengers in Dec 1978, had not been dropped, Amtrak systemwide ridership would have shown at least a 2.5% increase rather than a decrease in December.

RAIL FANTRIPS

Feb 23: Joint Region VII NARP & Ill. Rail Gen'l meeting, Bismarck Hotel, Chicago 11:30am. $13 incl lunch. Clark Tyler & Carole Foryst speak. Election of directors. Mike Morrison, 7306 N Ashland Blvd, Chic. IL 60626; 312-233-0427 by Feb 21.

One Rail Fantrips listing is free. Send full info to: RAIL TRAVEL NEWS, Fantrips Dept, PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

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